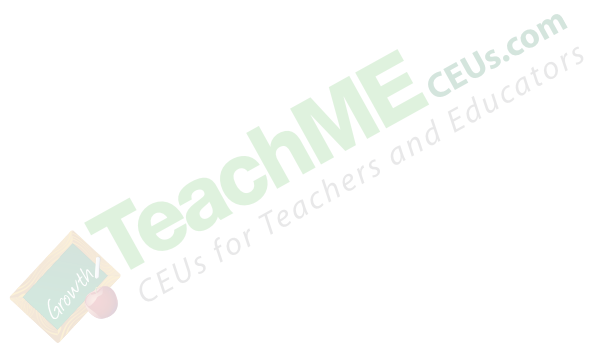


# Reducing Bullying Behaviors in the School Environment



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# Introduction

*Reducing Bullying Behaviors in the School Environment* is designed to equip educators with the knowledge and strategies necessary to tackle bullying effectively. This course is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of bullying behavior, practical strategies for reducing it in schools, and actionable plans for creating a safer educational environment. Section 1 begins with an exploration of bullying behaviors, exploring its various forms, such as physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying. This section will help you differentiate between bullying, teasing, and normal peer conflict while shedding light on the power dynamics that underlie bullying situations. We will also discuss the significant impact of technology and social media on bullying, providing strategies for managing cyberbullying. Understanding the characteristics of bullying, including its repetitive nature, intent to harm, and inherent power imbalance, will be crucial in recognizing and addressing these behaviors in your school. Additionally, we will examine the far-reaching impacts of bullying on students, including physical, psychological, social, and educational harm.

The second section of the course focuses on research behind school-based bullying prevention programs and strategies for reducing bullying in schools. We will cover legal and ethical considerations, ensuring you understand your obligations and responsibilities in handling bullying incidents. Prevention strategies will be explored in depth, including creating a positive school climate, building resilience in students, and implementing effective school-wide anti-bullying policies. You will learn about the importance of encouraging bystander intervention and peer support programs. We will discuss restorative practices, focusing on repairing harm and restoring relationships through mediation and conflict resolution techniques. Further, we will analyze real-life examples of anti-bullying and restorative justice programs, examining the strategies and interventions that have proven effective in various schools. Section two will end

with advice and discussion on how to prepare an action plan for school-based anti-bullying programs. By the end of this course, you will be equipped not only with a deep understanding of bullying behaviors and effective prevention strategies but also with the tools and confidence needed to make a lasting impact on creating a safer and more supportive school environment for all students.

## **Section 1: Understanding Bullying Behaviors**

Understanding the nature of bullying behaviors is essential for creating effective prevention and intervention strategies in schools. This section explores the core aspects of bullying, providing a comprehensive definition that includes physical, verbal, and relational bullying as well as cyberbullying. Additionally, we will discuss the characteristics of bullying, such as its repetitive nature, intent to harm, and power imbalance. Finally, we will address the wide-ranging impact of bullying on students, including physical, psychological, social, and educational harm. Through this thorough understanding, educators will be better equipped to recognize, address, and prevent bullying in their schools.

### **Defining Bullying**

Bullying is a form of unwanted and aggressive behavior where an individual intentionally and repeatedly causes another person harm or discomfort, often through physical contact, verbal abuse, or more subtle actions (American Psychological Association, 2024). Bullying is considered a form of youth violence, as well as an adverse childhood experience (ACE) (CDC, 2020). Research shows that bullying tends to peak between the ages of 11 and 13 and generally decreases as children get older (Psychology Today, 2024). Younger children are more likely to engage in overt physical aggression, such as kicking, hitting, and shoving. As children mature, relational aggression—such as spreading rumors and

socially excluding others—becomes more common. Most bullying incidents occur in and around schools and on playgrounds, though the internet has also become a significant venue for particularly harmful forms of bullying. While bullying scenarios can vary, certain characteristics are always present in bullying behavior, including:

- **Aggressive and Unwanted Behavior:** The actions are intentional, hostile, and not welcomed by the person being targeted. The behavior causes physical injury or emotional distress, leaving the victim hurt or upset.
- **Imbalance of Power:** There is a real or perceived power difference, where the individuals engaging in the bullying use their advantages—such as higher social status, physical size, access to embarrassing information, or emotional intimidation—to control or harm others. Oftentimes, those who are targeted find it challenging to stop the actions against them and struggle to protect themselves.
- **Repetition:** The behavior is repeated over time or has the potential to be repeated, establishing a pattern of aggression rather than a one-time incident.

At the core of bullying is an imbalance of power, where the bully exerts control over the victim using various forms of power. Power imbalances in bullying can be obvious, such as when a physically larger or stronger child targets a smaller, weaker one, or when a group bullies an individual; younger children often exhibit this form of bullying through hitting, shoving, or other aggressive physical actions (Vinney, 2021). However, these imbalances can also be less obvious, involving subtler factors like differences in social status, intelligence, or abilities, or the use of private or embarrassing information about the victim. In the digital age, having access to private or embarrassing information about someone can be a powerful tool for bullies. By recognizing the characteristics of bullying behavior, as well as

understanding how bullies leverage different forms of power, whether physical, social, emotional, or digital, educators can develop more targeted strategies to support victims and intervene appropriately.

## ***Types of Bullying***

Bullying can manifest in various forms, each with its own characteristics and impacts. By identifying the specific nature of bullying, educators can tailor their interventions to better support victims and create a safer environment for all students. Awareness of the different forms of bullying also highlights the need for comprehensive strategies that address both overt and subtle behaviors, ensuring no child's experience is overlooked. Below we will explore different types of bullying, starting with physical bullying, and then move on to verbal bullying, relational bullying, cyberbullying, sexual bullying, and prejudicial bullying.

**Physical bullying** is often the most apparent form of bullying, characterized by acts of aggression toward an individual or their belongings, including hitting, kicking, spitting on, or pushing (Vinney, 2021). Physical bullying also includes actions intended to intimidate or create fear without direct contact; this can involve perceived threats or gestures designed to make the target feel threatened, such as pretending to hit or making sudden movements near the victim's face (Pacer Center, 2023). These actions are often intended to provoke a reaction, causing the target to flinch or withdraw in fear. Physical bullying can begin at a very young age, sometimes as early as 4 or 5 years old. However, for these behaviors to be considered bullying, perpetrators must understand that their actions are causing harm to another person. This awareness of the impact on the victim is what differentiates typical childhood roughhousing from true bullying behavior. Studies indicate that physical bullying is more common among boys, who are frequently the victims and perpetrators of such aggressive behaviors (Vinney).



**Verbal bullying** encompasses the use of words to demean or intimidate, including name-calling, teasing, and making threats (Vinney, 2021). Verbal bullying is the most common and accessible form of bullying, often starting at a very young age (Pacer Center, 2023). Children quickly learn how to use words to hurt others, beginning with simple name-calling. As they grow older, they become more sophisticated in their verbal attacks, using slander, gossip, and threats to assert power over their peers. Boys tend to engage in more direct forms of verbal bullying, such as name-calling and threatening behavior, while girls often use gossip and slander to manipulate social dynamics and gain influence (Pacer Center). Verbal bullying typically peaks during middle school, a time when social hierarchies are particularly important and children are less tolerant of differences. As children mature and develop greater social awareness, verbal bullying often decreases, with many becoming more accepting of others' differences. However, the impact of verbal bullying can be long-lasting, affecting a victim's self-esteem and emotional well-being well into adulthood. Unlike physical bullying, verbal bullying can be more difficult to identify because it often happens in the absence of authority figures and can be disguised as playful banter. Research shows that verbal bullying is particularly prevalent among younger children, and while it affects both boys and girls, boys are generally more frequent targets (Vinney).

**Relational/emotional bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational aggression, is one of the most sophisticated and insidious forms of bullying because it is often carefully planned and executed, sometimes involving groups rather than individuals (Pacer Center, 2023). Relational bullying involves damaging someone's social relationships or reputation (Vinney, 2021). This type of bullying is less about physical or verbal confrontation and more about manipulating social dynamics to harm the victim. It can manifest in several ways, such as publicly embarrassing the victims, spreading rumors, deliberately excluding them from social events, or ostracizing them from peer groups. While relational bullying is often associated



with the stereotypical "mean girls" dynamic, studies indicate that while girls are more frequently targeted by relational bullying, both genders engage in these behaviors equally (Vinney).

Relational bullying is particularly harmful due to its subtle nature. Unlike physical or verbal bullying, relational bullying involves complex social manipulation that can be harder to detect and address (Vinney, 2021). This type of bullying is challenging for victims to identify, as it doesn't involve physical aggression and often leaves them questioning whether they did something to deserve the treatment (Pacer Center, 2023). The subtle nature of relational bullying makes it difficult for others to detect, as outsiders may not fully grasp the social dynamics or nuances at play. Relational bullying can be particularly damaging because it targets a victim's social standing and relationships, using tactics like exclusion, rumor-spreading, and manipulation to isolate the individual. The emotional impact of this kind of bullying can be profound, leading to feelings of loneliness, self-doubt, and anxiety. Since it is not as overt as physical bullying, it can persist unnoticed, making it crucial for educators and caregivers to be vigilant in recognizing the signs.

**Cyberbullying** represents a modern evolution of traditional bullying, leveraging digital platforms to inflict harm (StopBullying.gov, 2021). It involves the use of electronic devices and online platforms to harass, intimidate, or spread malicious content. With the pervasive nature of digital devices, cyberbullying can be relentless, providing no respite for victims. Common venues for cyberbullying include social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, as well as text messaging, instant messaging, online forums, chat rooms, email, and online gaming communities (Stopbullying.gov). Research indicates that while in-person bullying remains more common, cyberbullying is a growing concern with significant psychological impacts (Vinney, 2021). Also, cyberbullying is increasingly being recognized as a serious legal issue. Most states have laws that require

schools to address bullying, and many now explicitly include cyberbullying in these regulations. For instance, in Illinois, state law defines cyberbullying and designates violations as a class B misdemeanor, carrying legal repercussions for those involved (Piris, 2023).

One of the unique challenges of cyberbullying is its persistence. Unlike face-to-face bullying, which can be confined to specific times and places, cyberbullying can occur around the clock (StopBullying.gov, 2021). Digital devices enable continuous communication, making it difficult for victims to escape the harassment or find relief. The permanence of cyberbullying is another significant concern. Online content—whether comments, photos, or posts—can remain accessible indefinitely, creating a lasting public record. This permanence can negatively impact the online reputation of both the victim and the perpetrator, affecting future opportunities such as college admissions or employment (StopBullying.gov). Cyberbullying can also be harder to notice than traditional bullying. Since it often occurs in digital spaces that are not visible to teachers or parents, it can be challenging to detect and address. The covert nature of online interactions means that incidents may go unnoticed unless reported by the victim or others aware of the situation.

**Sexual bullying** includes unwanted sexual comments or actions, such as sexual jokes, gestures, and harassment (Vinney, 2021). This type of bullying can include making sexually inappropriate jokes, using derogatory language, making crude gestures, spreading sexual rumors, sending explicit photos or videos, and engaging in non-consensual touching or grabbing. Sexual bullying and harassment are alarmingly prevalent. A 2019 study revealed that a significant number of individuals experience sexual harassment or assault at some point in their lives, with 81% of women and 43% of men reporting such incidents (Vinney). Among adolescents, sexting—sending or receiving sexually explicit messages or images—has become increasingly common. Research indicates that 15% of youth aged 11

to 17 have sent sexts, and 27% have received them, with the frequency of this behavior rising with age (Vinney). The non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit content, such as private photos or videos, can escalate into sexual bullying and may even lead to sexual assault. The pervasive nature of digital communication means that these actions can have far-reaching and lasting impacts on victims.

**Prejudicial bullying** refers to harassment or mistreatment directed at individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation (Vinney, 2021). This form of bullying is rooted in harmful stereotypes and reflects a belief that certain groups deserve less respect or are inherently inferior to others. Although prejudicial bullying has not been as extensively researched as other forms, existing studies reveal that ethnic and sexual minorities are disproportionately affected; research indicates that these groups are more frequently targeted by bullying compared to their peers (Vinney). Interestingly, ethnic minorities who attend schools with a higher level of ethnic diversity tend to experience less bullying than those in more homogeneous environments. This suggests that increased diversity within schools may help reduce instances of prejudicial bullying by fostering a more inclusive and accepting atmosphere (Vinney).

### ***Why Some Youth Bully***

Youth who engage in bullying often do so because they lack the security and support systems that typically deter such behavior (PsychologyToday, 2024). While each individual is unique, and not every child who bullies fits a particular mold, there are several contributing factors that can lead to bullying behavior. Youth who engage in bullying often do so because it can be an effective way to get what they want, at least in the short term. This behavior is a means of establishing social dominance, especially for those who lack the social skills to achieve their goals without harming others. Over time, however, as children develop a broader range of behaviors, bullying becomes an increasingly dysfunctional way of

interacting (Psychology Today). Children and teenagers who feel secure and supported by their family, school, and peers are less likely to bully. However, for some youth who lack this support, bullying becomes a tool for navigating their social environment.

Another primary reason why some youth bully is related to peer dynamics. For these individuals, bullying can be a way to gain or maintain social power within their peer group (Psychology Today, 2024). It allows them to assert their status and control over others, often by excluding or dominating those they perceive as weaker or less socially influential. This behavior is reinforced when they receive validation or acceptance from their peers, creating a cycle that is difficult to break. Family factors also play a significant role in the development of bullying behavior. Youth who grow up in environments where aggression, violence, or bullying are normalized may adopt these behaviors as a way to cope with their own insecurities (Psychology Today). Inconsistent or authoritarian parenting, as well as a lack of emotional support and communication, can contribute to a child's propensity to bully others. Conversely, overly lenient parenting, where boundaries are not clearly set, can also lead to a lack of empathy and understanding in social interactions.

Emotionally, youth who bully often struggle with feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem. They may have been victims of bullying themselves, and they use aggression as a way to regain a sense of power and control (Psychology Today, 2024). School environments can further exacerbate bullying behavior. In schools where conduct issues and bullying are not adequately addressed, students may feel empowered to bully others without fear of consequences. Additionally, youth who feel excluded, stigmatized, or unaccepted at school may turn to bullying as a way to assert control or retaliate against those they perceive as different or threatening.

According to research, bullying is a learned behavior, not an inherent trait (Psychology Today, 2024). When the natural aggression seen in very young children is not appropriately managed, it can evolve into more persistent bullying behaviors as they grow older. These individuals often lack the ability to understand or empathize with the emotions of others, and they may misinterpret social cues, leading them to react inappropriately. Research suggests that bullies often lack prosocial behavior, are untroubled by anxiety, and misinterpret the intentions of others, often seeing hostility where none exists. Despite their negative interactions with others, bullies frequently view themselves in a positive light, which can make these behaviors more durable over time (StopBullying.gov, 2021).

### ***Who is At-Risk***

Certain youth are at a higher risk of being bullied, though it's important to note that no single factor guarantees this outcome. Bullying can occur in any setting, whether in cities, suburbs, or rural areas. Some groups are more vulnerable to bullying due to the social environment and prevailing stigmas. For instance, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth, those with disabilities, and socially isolated youth are often at an increased risk (StopBullying.gov, 2021). Data from the CDC (2020) highlights that nearly 40% of high school students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and about 33% of those unsure of their sexual identity, reported being bullied at school or electronically in the past year, compared to 22% of heterosexual students. These groups may face heightened levels of bullying, harassment, and even hate crimes as a result of societal stigma and the spread of false or harmful information.

Children who are bullied tend to share certain characteristics that set them apart from their peers. For example, they may be perceived as different in some way, such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses or unique clothing,

being new to a school, or lacking access to items that are deemed “cool” by their peers (Stopbullying.gov, 2021). They might also be seen as weak or unable to defend themselves, which can make them targets for bullies. Additionally, children who struggle with depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem are more likely to be bullied, as are those who are less popular or have few friends. Another factor that can increase the risk of being bullied is how a child interacts with others. Children who do not get along well with their peers, are seen as annoying or provocative, or engage in antagonistic behavior to get attention may be more likely to be bullied. However, it is crucial to understand that even if children exhibit these risk factors, it does not guarantee that they will be bullied. Bullying is a complex issue influenced by many variables, and each situation is unique (StopBullying.gov).

### ***Bullying Roles***

When discussing bullying scenarios, it's essential to focus on the behaviors rather than labeling the children involved. Instead of calling a child a "bully," it's more constructive to refer to that individual as "the child who bullied." When schools, teachers, parents, and other adults label children as "bullies," it implies that their behavior is fixed and unchangeable, creating the expectation that they will always act as a "bully" (Pacer Center, 2023). These expectations can strongly influence behavior, often leading children to conform to what the adults around them believe they will do. When bullying occurs, children can play various roles beyond just being the bully or the bullied. This dynamic, often referred to by researchers as the "circle of bullying," encompasses both those directly involved in bullying and those who actively or passively support or oppose it (StopBullying.gov, 2021):

- **Kids Who Bully:** These children engage in bullying behaviors toward their peers. Various factors can contribute to their involvement, including environmental influences, peer dynamics, or personal challenges. These

children often need support to address the root causes of their behavior and to develop healthier ways of interacting with others.

- **Kids Who Are Bullied:** These children are the targets of bullying. While certain factors may increase a child's risk of being bullied, it's important to recognize that not all children with these characteristics will experience bullying. Children who are bullied may require assistance in learning how to cope with and respond to bullying situations effectively.
- **Kids Who Assist:** These children may not initiate or lead the bullying but act as "assistants" to those who do. They might encourage the bullying behavior or even join in, which can escalate the situation.
- **Kids Who Reinforce:** These children are not directly involved in the bullying itself, but they provide an audience that encourages the behavior. By laughing or showing approval, they reinforce the bully's actions, making it more likely that the bullying will continue.
- **Outsiders:** These children remain on the sidelines, neither supporting the bullying nor defending the child being bullied. Although they are not directly involved, their presence as an audience can inadvertently encourage bullying behavior. Outsiders often want to help but may not know how.
- **Kids Who Defend:** These children take an active role in supporting the child who is being bullied. They may comfort the targeted child or intervene to stop the bullying. Defenders play a crucial role in creating a supportive environment and can help de-escalate bullying situations.

The role of a bystander in a bullying situation is incredibly significant, often holding more power than is immediately apparent. Unlike the more straightforward roles of the person being bullied and the one doing the bullying,



bystanders have the ability to influence the situation in a variety of ways (Pacer Center, 2023). They can exacerbate the problem by joining in, encouraging the behavior, or even escalating it. On the other hand, bystanders can also play a crucial role in improving the situation for the target by directly intervening—whether by discouraging the person bullying, defending the target, or redirecting the situation away from bullying. Some bystanders take action by rallying support from peers or by reporting the behavior to adults.

Students often have unique insight into bullying situations. They are usually aware of what's happening long before adults are and understand the social dynamics at play in their school, including who is vulnerable to bullying. While many students don't approve of bullying, they may not know how to intervene effectively. However, with the right support and encouragement, students can become a powerful force in preventing and stopping bullying. By simply choosing not to participate or by showing support for the target, bystanders can significantly alter the outcome. In fact, research shows that nearly 60% of bullying situations stop when a peer intervenes (Pacer Center, 2023). This highlights the critical impact bystanders can have in addressing and reducing bullying.

## **Impact of Bullying on Youth**

Bullying has far-reaching effects that can impact not only those who are directly involved but also those who witness the event. The negative outcomes of bullying extend across mental health, substance use, and even suicide risk, making it crucial to address and mitigate bullying behaviors and their effects on all parties involved (StopBullying.gov, 2021). For children who are bullied, the consequences can be severe and long-lasting. They often experience a range of negative physical, social, emotional, academic, and mental health issues. These children are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety, with increased feelings of sadness and

loneliness. Such emotional distress can lead to changes in sleep and eating patterns, as well as a loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed. Unfortunately, these problems often persist into adulthood. Additionally, kids who are bullied may report various health complaints and exhibit decreased academic performance, which includes lower GPA and standardized test scores. Their participation in school activities may decline, and they are more likely to miss, skip, or even drop out of school altogether. In extreme cases, a small number of children who have been bullied might retaliate with violent actions; for example, in 12 of 15 school shootings in the 1990s, the perpetrators had histories of being bullied (StopBullying.gov).

Children who bully others are also at risk for a range of negative outcomes, both in the short term and as they grow into adults. They are more likely to engage in violent and risky behaviors, such as abusing alcohol and other drugs, getting into fights, vandalizing property, and dropping out of school (StopBullying.gov, 2021). These behaviors often continue into adulthood, leading to criminal convictions, traffic citations, and abusive behavior toward romantic partners, spouses, or children. Witnessing bullying can also have harmful effects on bystanders. Children who observe bullying are at a higher risk of using tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs. They are also more likely to experience mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, and may begin to miss or skip school. The relationship between bullying and suicide is complex. While media reports often draw a direct connection between the two, the reality is that most youth who are bullied do not have thoughts of suicide or engage in suicidal behaviors. However, bullying can contribute to an increased risk of suicide, especially when combined with other factors like depression, problems at home, and a history of trauma (StopBullying.gov). Certain groups, such as American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian American, and LGBTQ+ youth, are at a heightened risk of suicide, particularly when they lack support from parents, peers, and schools. In such

unsupportive environments, bullying can exacerbate the situation and increase the risk of suicide even further (StopBullying.gov).

### ***Bullying and Trauma***

Bullying is recognized as an adverse childhood experience (ACE), a category of events that can have significant and long-lasting effects on a child's development and well-being (National Child Traumatic Stress Network [NCTSN], 2024). The relationship between bullying and trauma is complex, with significant overlap between the two. Children and teens who have been exposed to trauma and violence are more likely to be involved in bullying, either as perpetrators, victims, or both. For example, those who have experienced trauma might bully others as a maladaptive way to regain a sense of control or power. Conversely, these children might also be more distressed by bullying experiences or, in some cases, appear desensitized to such behavior. Unfortunately, they are also more likely to become targets of bullying themselves.

The impact of being bullied can lead to severe traumatic stress reactions, including Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (NCTSN, 2024). A 2012 study found that among students who experienced bullying, 27.6% of boys and 40.5% of girls had PTSD scores within the clinical range (NCTSN). The symptoms were even more pronounced for students who both bullied others and were targets of bullying themselves. Children who have experienced trauma often develop social or interpersonal difficulties, which can make them more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying. Moreover, studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have shown that children who report a higher number of ACEs are also more likely to engage in bullying behavior themselves (NCTSN). This underscores the cyclical nature of trauma and bullying, where past trauma increases the likelihood of both victimization and perpetration in bullying scenarios.

## Section 1 Conclusion

Understanding bullying behavior is a critical step in addressing and reducing its occurrence in schools. This section has explored the multifaceted nature of bullying, examining its various forms, the roles individuals play in bullying dynamics, and the profound impact it can have on those involved. Recognizing the characteristics and underlying causes of bullying provides a solid foundation for educators and school administrators to develop effective interventions. In the next section, we will look into strategies and programming specifically designed to reduce bullying behaviors in schools. These strategies will include both preventive measures and reactive approaches, offering a comprehensive framework for creating a safer and more supportive school environment for all students.

## Section 1 Key Terms

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood, such as abuse, neglect, bullying, or household dysfunction, which can lead to long-term negative effects on health and well-being.

Bullying - A form of unwanted and aggressive behavior where an individual intentionally and repeatedly causes another person harm or discomfort, often through physical contact, verbal abuse, or more subtle actions.

Cyberbullying - Bullying that occurs through electronic devices and online platforms, using digital means to harass, intimidate, or spread malicious content.

Imbalance of Power - A characteristic of bullying where there is a real or perceived power difference between the bully and the victim, with the bully using their advantage to control or harm others.

Kids Who Assist - Children who do not initiate bullying but act as assistants, encouraging or joining in the bullying behavior.

Kids Who Bully - Children who engage in bullying behaviors toward their peers, often influenced by environmental factors, peer dynamics, or personal challenges.

Kids Who Defend - Children who actively support the victim of bullying by comforting them or intervening to stop the bullying.

Kids Who Reinforce - Children who provide an audience that encourages bullying behavior, often by laughing or showing approval.

Kids Who Are Bullied - Children who are the targets of bullying and may require assistance in coping with and responding to bullying situations.

Outsiders - Children who remain on the sidelines during bullying, neither supporting the bullying nor defending the victim.

Physical Bullying - Bullying that involves physical aggression toward an individual or their belongings, such as hitting, kicking, or pushing.

Prejudicial Bullying - Bullying that targets individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, rooted in harmful stereotypes.

Repetition - A characteristic of bullying where the behavior is repeated over time, establishing a pattern of aggression.

Relational/Emotional Bullying - A form of bullying that involves damaging someone's social relationships or reputation through social manipulation, exclusion, or rumor-spreading.

Sexual Bullying - Bullying that includes unwanted sexual comments or actions, such as sexual jokes, gestures, and harassment.

Trauma - A severe emotional response to a distressing event, which can affect an individual's mental, emotional, and physical health.

Verbal Bullying - Bullying that involves the use of words to demean or intimidate, including name-calling, teasing, and making threats.

## Section 1 Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on your current understanding of the different forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyberbullying, etc.). How have you seen these forms manifest in your school, and how did you respond?
2. Consider the role of technology in modern bullying. How do you address cyberbullying in your classroom or school, and what challenges have you faced in dealing with it?
3. Reflect on the concept of labeling children as "bullies" or "victims." How can changing the language you use influence the outcomes of bullying interventions?
4. What strategies do you currently use to support students who may be at higher risk of being bullied due to their perceived differences (e.g., LGBTQ students, students with disabilities)? What additional supports might be necessary?
5. How do you address sexual bullying in your school, and how prepared do you feel to handle incidents that involve complex issues like sexting or sexual harassment?

## Section 1 Activities

1. **Analyze Bullying Incident Data:** Collect and analyze recent data on bullying incidents in your school to determine trends and areas needing attention.

2. **Develop a Resource List:** Curate a list of anti-bullying resources, including books, websites, and organizations that could support your program.
  - **Create Classroom Resources:** Develop classroom materials such as posters, worksheets, or activities to promote anti-bullying messages.
3. **Review Legal and Ethical Standards:** Research and review the legal and ethical standards related to bullying and ensure your program aligns with these guidelines.
4. **Evaluate Emerging Trends:** Investigate and incorporate emerging trends in bullying prevention, such as digital citizenship education or new psychological insights.
5. **Collaborate with Stakeholders:** Organize meetings with parents, students, and staff to discuss and gather input for an anti-bullying action plan.

## Section 2: Strategies for Reducing Bullying in Schools

In order to effectively reduce bullying in schools, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses both prevention and intervention. Section 2 of this course explores the legal and ethical considerations that guide educators' responsibilities, and presents evidence-based strategies that can be implemented to foster a safer and more supportive learning environment. From cultivating a positive school climate and building resilience in students to developing robust anti-bullying policies and encouraging bystander intervention, this section provides actionable insights and tools. Additionally, we will examine case studies of anti-bullying and restorative justice programs in action. Finally, the section concludes with the steps necessary to prepare an action plan for bullying prevention in schools. Through these strategies, educators will be better equipped to create an inclusive environment where every student can thrive.



## Legal Obligations and Ethical Considerations

Schools in the United States have specific legal obligations when it comes to addressing bullying, though these obligations vary depending on whether the issue falls under federal or state jurisdiction. State and local lawmakers have been proactive in enacting measures to prevent bullying and protect students. Every state, along with the District of Columbia and U.S. territories, has its own approach to handling bullying (StopBullying.gov):

- **Legislation and Policies:** Many states have established laws, policies, and regulations that require schools and districts to develop anti-bullying policies, procedures for investigating incidents, and strategies for responding to bullying. Some states have even mandated bullying prevention programs and the inclusion of bullying prevention in health education standards, as well as teacher professional development on the subject.
- **Model Policies:** In addition to specific laws, some states provide model policies that schools and districts can use as guidelines when developing their local anti-bullying policies.
- **Criminal Codes:** In certain cases, bullying is addressed in state criminal codes, which may apply to juveniles, especially in more severe cases or when bullying behaviors cross into criminal conduct, such as cyberbullying.

The government-run website StopBullying.gov features an interactive state map that allows users to explore and learn about anti-bullying laws in each state. The U.S. Department of Education identified common components in state anti-bullying laws and regulations, which have evolved over time. These components typically include:

- **Definitions:** Clear definitions of what constitutes bullying, often detailing specific behaviors that qualify.
- **Targeted Characteristics:** Definitions that identify characteristics commonly targeted by bullying, such as race, disability, or sexual orientation.
- **School District Requirements:** Detailed requirements for school districts to implement policies and procedures for preventing and responding to bullying incidents.

These components help ensure a consistent approach to bullying across different states, while still allowing for variations in how each state chooses to address the issue (StopBullying.gov).

### ***Ethical Considerations in Handling Bullying Incidents***

Educators play a crucial role in identifying and addressing bullying in schools, and this responsibility carries significant ethical implications. As trusted figures in students' lives, educators are ethically obligated to protect the well-being of all students, which includes taking appropriate action when bullying occurs.

Educators must consider the following when addressing bullying incidents at school (DeLuca et al., 2019):

- **Duty of Care.** Educators have a duty of care, which means they are morally and legally responsible for ensuring a safe environment for students. This duty requires them to be vigilant in recognizing signs of bullying and to take action to prevent harm. Failing to report bullying can lead to prolonged suffering for the victim and may contribute to an unsafe school environment, violating this duty.
- **Confidentiality vs. Transparency.** When dealing with bullying, educators must balance the need for confidentiality with the importance of

transparency. While it is essential to protect the privacy of all students involved, it is equally important to ensure that the incident is appropriately documented and addressed. Educators must navigate this delicate balance to maintain trust with students while fulfilling their ethical obligation to report and intervene in bullying situations.

- **Bias and Fairness.** Ethical reporting also involves being impartial and fair. Educators must be careful to avoid letting personal biases influence their decision-making. Every bullying incident should be reported and investigated with the same level of seriousness, regardless of the identities of the students involved. This fairness ensures that all students are treated equitably and that the school's anti-bullying policy is applied consistently.
- **Advocacy and Support.** Educators are often advocates for their students, and reporting bullying is an essential part of this role. By taking action, educators not only fulfill their ethical obligations but also demonstrate their commitment to fostering a supportive and safe learning environment. This advocacy helps empower students, showing them that they can rely on trusted adults to stand up for their rights and well-being.

## Prevention Strategies

### *Positive School Climate*

To effectively prevent and mitigate bullying in schools, establishing a positive and supportive school climate is crucial. To build such an environment, schools should focus on establishing a culture of inclusion that actively welcomes all students, ensuring that everyone feels valued and respected. Schrepf (2023) shares some actionable strategies to foster a positive school climate:

- 1. Create a Supportive Culture:** To create positive, safe, and affirming school environments, schools should focus on a few key strategies. These include developing and enforcing strong anti-bullying policies, providing training for students and staff on preventing harm—such as bystander intervention programs (discussed in detail below)—and actively engaging with students and families on mental health topics (U.S. Surgeon General, 2021). Additionally, using inclusive language and behaviors is crucial. Further, set a tone of respect in classrooms, where educators model positive behavior and create clear expectations for student interactions. Where possible, school districts should also consider structural changes, like implementing a later start to the school day, to further support students' well-being.
- 2. Strengthen Student-Adult Connections:** Encourage adults to make meaningful connections with students by learning their names, engaging with their interests, and actively listening. This personal attention can help students feel valued and supported. Further, educators are often the first to notice when a student is struggling or exhibiting unusual behavior, such as withdrawing from activities or acting out; by being attentive to these signs, educators can take appropriate action to support the student (U.S. Surgeon General). This might involve connecting them with school counselors, nurses, or administrators who can provide further assistance and access to necessary services. Establishing these connections not only helps address immediate concerns but also fosters trust and a sense of safety, which are essential components of a positive relationship between educators and students.
- 3. Educate and Empower Students:** Incorporate lessons on bullying into the curriculum, and seek out resources from organizations to train school faculty as Bullying Prevention Specialists.

4. **Reinforce Positive Behaviors:** Actively praise students for showing kindness and supporting their peers. Recognize and reward positive behaviors to encourage a culture of respect and empathy.
5. **Provide Mental Health Support:** Ensure students have access to mental health resources. A tiered approach to mental health services, including evidence-based prevention practices and trauma-informed care, ensures that students receive the right level of support when they need it. Programs like Project AWARE, which funds school-provider partnerships, exemplify how schools can coordinate resources to address the mental health needs of students comprehensively, from prevention and early intervention to treatment (U.S. Surgeon General). Additionally, increasing the number of school counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists, particularly those trained to support students with disabilities, can significantly enhance the school's capacity to respond to mental health challenges. Current ratios of counselors to students are often inadequate, making it difficult to provide timely and effective support. By utilizing federal, state, and local resources, such as those provided by the American Rescue Plan, schools can better meet these needs and ensure that every student has access to the mental health care they require.
6. **Protect Vulnerable Populations:** Create safe spaces for marginalized and vulnerable students where they can seek refuge and support.
7. **Promote Connection:** Use activities like morning meetings, small group sessions with counselors, and participation in extra-curricular activities to foster connections among students. These efforts can help build resilience and empathy, which are crucial for preventing bullying.

By implementing these strategies, schools can create a culture that promotes safer, more inclusive environments that reduce bullying and support the well-being of all students.

### ***Anti-Bullying Programs and Policies***

School-based bullying prevention programs can reduce bullying by up to 20% (Schrepf, 2023). According to the Nebraska Department of Education (2024), the most effective anti-bullying plans are those that are carefully designed and consistently implemented across the entire school district. These plans should reflect the school's commitment to fostering a caring and supportive atmosphere, where bullying is not tolerated. A comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention plan might include specific behavior programs, standardized forms, philosophies of interaction, and curriculum guidelines. These elements provide a structured approach to addressing bullying, ensuring that all students receive consistent messages and interventions. One widely used program designed to foster a positive school environment while also supporting anti-bullying efforts is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Bullying prevention within the framework of PBIS focuses on blending PBIS principles with explicit instruction tailored to students' developmental levels (PBIS, 2024). The goal is to reduce bullying behavior, but the approach may vary depending on the community and the grade level—whether in elementary, middle, or high school.

- One of the key foundational elements of bullying prevention in a PBIS framework is establishing clear, school-wide expectations (PBIS, 2024). Every member of the school community should understand what it means to be respectful, recognizing how respect is demonstrated and experienced. Equally important is the ability to identify inappropriate behavior, understanding when and how someone else's actions cross the line. By creating and enforcing consistent, school-wide definitions of respect and

inappropriate behavior, schools can ensure that everyone is on the same page, contributing to a cohesive and supportive environment where bullying is less likely to occur.

PBIS uses a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework for bullying prevention, which is highly effective in addressing the varying needs of students (PBIS, 2024). Not all students respond equally to bullying prevention strategies, which is why a multi-tiered approach is crucial. Schools implementing PBIS can effectively prevent and reduce bullying by using strategies that are tailored to different levels of student needs:

1. **Tier 1** or universal prevention efforts, aim to reduce bullying risks and boost resilience for all students within a school community. These strategies are designed to benefit every student by improving the overall social and emotional climate of the school and promoting positive and inclusive behaviors (StopBullying.gov, 2021). Effective measures include fostering a supportive environment through classroom meetings that reinforce positive behavior expectations and provide guidance on handling bullying situations. These efforts are often supported by state or national initiatives, such as bully prevention curricula, positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, which address general student needs and academic challenges across the entire school population.
2. **Tier 2** provides an additional layer of targeted assistance for students who are at a higher risk of being involved in bullying—either as perpetrators or victims. For students who are prone to bullying others, Tier 2 interventions may include reinforcing the consequences of their actions, coupled with mediation sessions led by teachers or counselors to address underlying interpersonal conflicts (StopBullying.gov, 2021). This approach not only holds students accountable but also aims to resolve the conflicts that often



lead to bullying behavior. Additionally, to diminish the social rewards that bullies might receive, these interventions encourage students to take a stand and defend their peers who are targeted by bullying. For students who are at risk of being bullied, Tier 2 services might include assertiveness training to help them confidently stand up for themselves, as well as the creation of peer support groups. Such support networks can provide a protective buffer, helping these students feel less isolated and more empowered.

3. **Tier 3** is for students who require more intensive interventions. These indicated interventions are highly individualized, providing more intense and tailored support to a small group of students who require specialized assistance. The focus of Tier 3 is on addressing significant mental health concerns, behavioral issues, and academic challenges that may be impacting a student's overall well-being and performance (StopBullying.gov, 2021). Indicated interventions often involve a coordinated effort among various stakeholders, including administrators, multiple teachers, school resource officers, family members, and other key figures in a student's life. For instance, a school-based mental health professional might implement trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to help a student manage symptoms related to exposure to violence or trauma. This intervention would be part of a broader strategy that includes academic and social support, ensuring that the student receives comprehensive care.

MTSS is effective in bullying intervention by addressing the diverse academic, behavioral, and health needs of students through a structured approach. It begins with universal screening to identify students who may require additional support. Early intervention services are then provided to address issues promptly before they escalate. Collaborative problem-solving involves engaging various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and mental health professionals, to

develop and implement effective solutions. Progress monitoring ensures that the interventions are working and allows for adjustments as needed. Finally, MTSS applies different levels of support based on the intensity of students' needs, ensuring that each student receives the appropriate level of intervention to effectively address bullying and related challenges.

Before implementing bullying prevention programs, it's important for schools to assess the needs of the student population. Once the need is established, a leadership team can decide on the appropriate investment in prevention efforts. Even if bullying is not a primary concern, Tier 1 PBIS systems should include a school-wide approach to identifying inappropriate behaviors, clear routines for stopping such behaviors, and formalized strategies for students to seek help from adults when they encounter aggression, intimidation, or harassment. These procedures should be applicable in all school settings, including online interactions, to ensure comprehensive support and prevention (PBIS, 2024).

### **Social Emotional Learning**

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) plays a critical role in creating a positive school climate and preventing bullying, and it is a research-based tier 1 support. SEL focuses on helping students acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions, build resilience, set and achieve positive goals, empathize with others, build strong relationships, and make responsible decisions (StopBullying.gov, 2023). Resilience acts as a crucial safeguard against the harmful effects of bullying, enabling children to recover and thrive despite negative experiences. Research has shown that effective SEL programs in schools not only enhance students' social-emotional skills but also improve their attitudes toward themselves and others, leading to better social interactions. Integrating SEL into school-wide frameworks and classroom activities is essential for fostering these skills in students. When teachers lead SEL initiatives

and embed them into daily lessons, they help students develop a deeper understanding of their emotions and behaviors. This, in turn, cultivates a more empathetic and supportive school community where students are better equipped to handle conflicts, resist engaging in bullying, and support their peers.

**Building Resilience with SEL.** Resilience is the ability to recover and thrive in the face of challenges, and it is a crucial skill for students, especially when dealing with bullying (CalmClassroom, 2023). Resilience allows students to overcome adversity and reduces the long-term negative impact of traumatic experiences like bullying. For educators, fostering resilience in students is vital as it prepares them to face difficulties in their lives. Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs are instrumental in building resilience. By promoting strong relationships between students and caring adults, SEL programs help students feel supported and valued, which significantly enhances their ability to bounce back from hardships. Teaching emotional awareness is another key component of SEL that aids in resilience; when students can identify and manage their emotions, they are better equipped to handle stressful situations like bullying. Furthermore, SEL programs emphasize the development of self-efficacy—empowering students to believe in their ability to overcome challenges—and fostering healthy self-esteem by helping students recognize their inherent worth. Finally, integrating mindfulness practices into SEL curricula can enhance resilience by helping students manage stress and remain grounded during difficult times. These strategies collectively equip students with the tools they need to withstand and recover from bullying and other life challenges (CalmClassroom).

### **Anti-Bullying Policies**

Strict anti-bullying policies are essential for creating a safe and respectful learning environment in schools. These policies clearly define unacceptable behaviors, set consistent consequences, and ensure that bullying incidents are addressed

promptly and fairly (Rachel's Challenge, 2023). By establishing clear guidelines and a reliable reporting system, schools not only deter bullying but also provide a framework for supporting both victims and perpetrators, helping to prevent further incidents. Moreover, these policies contribute to a positive school culture where students understand the importance of treating each other with respect. Regularly reviewing and updating these policies ensures they remain effective and aligned with current legal requirements and best practices.

Rachel's Challenge (2023) outlines essential components of effective anti-bullying policies in schools, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Here's a breakdown of the key elements:

- **School-Wide Commitment to Anti-Bullying:** For an anti-bullying policy to be successful, it must be embraced school-wide. This means that all teachers, staff, and administrators must show a unified dedication to creating a bully-free environment. This commitment can manifest in several ways, including statements from leadership, school mission and value integration, classroom strategies, student involvement, staff training, family and community communication, and the establishment of a safety team.
- **Reporting and Investigation Procedures:** Effective anti-bullying policies must include straightforward and confidential procedures for reporting and investigating incidents, including a simple and clear process, an unbiased investigation, and an option for anonymous reporting.
- **Consequences for Bullying Behavior:** A well-defined policy includes fair and consistent consequences for bullying. Disciplinary actions should be proportional to the severity and frequency of the bullying behavior. These may include the loss of privileges (e.g., bus-riding or participation in school activities), suspension, expulsion, and in some cases, legal repercussions.

- **Support and Resources for Victims:** To address the needs of both victims and perpetrators, schools should provide counseling services, as well as information and access to community resources.

By incorporating these elements, schools can create a comprehensive and effective anti-bullying policy that promotes a safe and respectful learning environment for all students.

### ***Research on School-Based Anti-Bullying Programs***

Schools play a crucial role in creating environments where students feel safe and supported, as this is essential for their learning and development. Recognizing this, the Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) issued a recommendation in April 2022 advocating for school-based anti-bullying interventions aimed at reducing bullying and enhancing students' mental health (Mercado-Crespo, 2022). The CPSTF is an independent, nonfederal panel composed of 15 public health prevention experts who offer evidence-based recommendations on programs and interventions designed to protect and improve public health. Their recommendations are highly regarded as the gold standard for effective public health interventions.

The CPSTF (2021) conducted a comprehensive analysis to assess the effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying interventions. This evaluation was based on a systematic review of existing research, primarily drawing from a meta-analysis conducted by Fraguas et al. (2021) that included 69 studies. These studies assessed various outcomes, including traditional bullying perpetration, victimization, cyberbullying, and mental health symptoms among students. The meta-analysis by Fraguas et al. found that school-based anti-bullying interventions produced small but consistent reductions in bullying behaviors and associated mental health symptoms. Specifically, the interventions were effective in reducing traditional bullying perpetration, victimization, and cyberbullying, as well as

improving mental health outcomes among students. The study indicated that between 105 and 155 students would need to receive the intervention to prevent one case of bullying, while 80 students would need the intervention to prevent one instance of self-reported mental health symptoms (CPSTF). CPSTF's conclusions were reinforced by additional analyses of 19 studies conducted in the United States and Canada, which supported the broader findings of the Fraguas et al. meta-analysis. The interventions were generally effective across different settings, including urban, suburban, and rural schools, and among diverse student populations.

The CPSTF's findings are particularly applicable to elementary and middle schools but may also be relevant for preschool, kindergarten, and high schools. Most interventions examined were multicomponent, involving group education sessions, professional consultations, and training for educators, which were key to their effectiveness (CPSTF, 2021). Interventions may also include broader school-wide activities, media events, student assignments, and communications from school administrators to engage parents and caregivers in the anti-bullying efforts. The results suggest that these interventions can be adapted to various school environments and are likely to be beneficial in reducing bullying and improving student well-being. The importance of the CPSTF's recommendation cannot be overstated, particularly given the prevalence of bullying and its harmful effects on those involved. With 1 in 5 high school students reporting being bullied on school property and 1 in 6 experiencing electronic bullying, the need for effective interventions is clear. The CPSTF's evidence-based recommendations can help schools and communities make informed decisions on how to best allocate limited resources to combat bullying. Moreover, these school-based interventions can complement broader community efforts to prevent violence, offering a comprehensive approach to improving the well-being of students and the community as a whole.

## Additional Studies

The CPSTF (2021) discussed two additional systematic reviews, which provide insights into the effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying interventions:

1. **Gaffney et al. (2021a)** examined 88 studies, including 45 randomized controlled trials, to assess the impact of school-based interventions on traditional bullying. The review found that these interventions led to significant reductions in both bullying perpetration (18% to 19%) and victimization (15% to 16%). A follow-up study by the same authors (Gaffney et al., 2021b) highlighted that specific intervention components, such as a whole-school approach, anti-bullying policies, classroom rules, and parental involvement, were linked to more significant reductions in bullying. Notably, informal peer involvement and providing information to parents were particularly effective in reducing both perpetration and victimization. However, the study found no clear correlation between the number of intervention components and the overall effectiveness of the program.
2. **Gaffney et al. (2019)** focused on the effectiveness of school-based interventions specifically targeting cyberbullying. This review, which included 24 studies (15 of which were randomized controlled trials), found that these interventions resulted in a 10% to 15% reduction in cyberbullying perpetration and a 14% reduction in victimization.

These reviews collectively highlight the importance of targeted intervention components and the potential for school-based programs to effectively reduce both traditional bullying and cyberbullying.

## Further Research Needed

Despite the progress made in understanding and addressing school-based bullying, significant gaps remain in the evidence base, highlighting the need for



further research. The CPSTF (2021) and Fraguas et al. have identified key areas where additional research could provide valuable insights. One of the primary concerns is the small effect sizes reported in most studies on bullying outcomes. To achieve a greater impact, future research should focus on identifying specific intervention content, components, and combinations of components that can significantly reduce bullying. This research is crucial not only for programs aimed at all students but also for those targeting students at higher risk of bullying behaviors. Another critical area for research is the effectiveness of interventions for students who disproportionately experience bullying, such as those who self-identify as LGBTQI+, have disabilities, or are overweight. Understanding how these interventions can be tailored to meet the unique needs of these groups is essential for creating inclusive and effective anti-bullying strategies.

Additional research is also needed to explore the effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying interventions in various settings, such as high schools, charter or private schools, rural communities, and communities with lower incomes (CPSTF, 2021). These studies could help determine whether the current interventions are adaptable and effective across different educational and socio-economic environments. Further research should also investigate the impact of school-based anti-bullying interventions on specific mental and behavioral health outcomes, such as depression, as well as educational outcomes, bystander actions, and other forms of violence and delinquent behavior. Understanding these broader effects could help in developing more comprehensive strategies that not only reduce bullying but also enhance overall student well-being and school climate. Addressing these gaps through targeted research will be vital for refining anti-bullying programs and ensuring they are both effective and equitable across diverse student populations and educational settings.

## ***Restorative Justice***

Traditional punitive approaches often fail to address the root causes of bullying, sometimes worsening the situation. Restorative practices offer a promising alternative by focusing on dialogue, accountability, and community building (Restorative Justice 101, 2024). Rooted in restorative justice (RJ), these practices aim to repair harm rather than simply punish offenders. They provide a framework for constructive conversations and fostering an inclusive school environment. Unlike traditional punitive methods, which can perpetuate resentment and conflict, restorative practices work to heal relationships and promote understanding.

Teachers play a critical role in implementing restorative anti-bullying strategies by facilitating restorative circles where the bully, victim, and community members engage in open dialogue (Restorative Justice, 2024). This process helps repair harm and encourages empathy and understanding, leading to meaningful behavioral change. Restorative practices shift the focus from punitive measures to repairing relationships. Psychologically, these practices help bullies recognize the impact of their actions and foster empathy, while empowering victims by allowing them to express their feelings and regain control; sociologically, restorative practices promote a positive, community-oriented environment that reduces social isolation and supports constructive conflict resolution (Restorative Justice). By proactively building relationships and communication skills, restorative practices not only address individual bullying incidents but also contribute to a broader cultural shift toward respect and inclusivity within schools.

Implementing restorative practices in schools faces several challenges, including staff skepticism toward moving away from traditional disciplinary methods, insufficient resources for proper training, and potential resistance from parents (Restorative Justice 101, 2024). Additionally, there is a lack of empirical data on

the long-term effectiveness of these practices, as noted by researchers. For restorative practices to be successful, they must be integrated into school policies and supported by policy changes, such as updating school codes of conduct and developing statewide educational policies. Adequate resources and ongoing training for educators are crucial to ensure effective implementation and sustained success.

### **Case Example: Restorative Justice in Action**

In 2011, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) in Virginia launched a district-wide restorative justice (RJ) initiative led by Vickie Shoap, a veteran RJ facilitator from Virginia's criminal justice system (Wachtel, 2013). Shoap was hired to develop and manage the RJ implementation, which aimed to educate schools about restorative practices and train staff to facilitate RJ processes. The initiative's primary goals were to build a culture of conflict resolution, integrate restorative practices into classroom management, and offer RJ as an alternative to traditional disciplinary measures like suspensions.

FCPS's approach to restorative justice includes a range of practices tailored to different situations, from preventive techniques like restorative conversations and classroom circles to more intensive interventions like restorative justice conferences and re-entry meetings (Restorative Justice 101, 2024). This comprehensive program resulted in a significant reduction in bullying incidents and improved overall student well-being. The positive outcomes highlight the effectiveness of teacher-led restorative practices in creating a safer and more supportive school environment. These practices are supported by Northern Virginia Mediation Service (NVMS), a community partner that provides trained volunteer facilitators to assist with RJ cases.

## ***Bystander Intervention and Peer Support Programs***

Studies show that in 85% of bullying incidents at schools, other students—bystanders—are present but do not take action; however, when bystanders do step in, bullying stops within 10 seconds in 57% of cases (Monique Burr Foundation, 2024). This suggests that many bullying incidents could be quickly stopped if bystanders intervened. So why don't they? There are many reasons for this hesitation. Some students might not recognize bullying when they see it, while others fear that stepping in could make them the next target. Some believe their actions won't help or might even make things worse. Peer pressure, social dynamics, and personal biases can also discourage them from acting. Additionally, the bystander effect—a social phenomenon where individuals are less likely to intervene in a situation when others are present—plays a role, with each person assuming someone else will take responsibility (Monique Burr Foundation). So, how can educators encourage students to go from being passive observers to active interveners? The key is creating a school environment that supports and encourages positive bystander intervention behavior. Schools must lead the way by equipping students with the knowledge, tools, and support they need to confidently and safely intervene when they witness bullying.

### **Bystander Intervention Training in Schools**

Bystander intervention training is a powerful tool for addressing bullying in schools, sending a clear message that everyone in the school community has a role in preventing harmful behaviors. Bystander intervention training equips students and staff with the skills and confidence to recognize, safely intervene, and prevent bullying situations. In schools, this training often involves educating participants about the different roles bystanders can play, such as being a passive observer, a defender of the victim, or an active participant in addressing the bullying. The training typically includes role-playing exercises, discussions on the

consequences of inaction, and strategies for intervening without escalating the situation or putting oneself in harm's way. Likewise, training should also involve educating students and staff about social norms, particularly those related to behavior and power dynamics, and emphasizing how individuals can influence these norms through their daily interactions (National Education Union, 2023). By empowering bystanders to take positive action, the training helps create a culture of accountability and support, where students feel responsible for each other's well-being and are more likely to intervene when they witness bullying behavior. This model is effective as part of a comprehensive, whole-school approach to tackling harmful attitudes and behaviors related to bullying. It engages every member of the school community, ensuring that no one can dismiss the issue as irrelevant to them. By incorporating bystander intervention into the broader school culture—alongside systems that promote student voice, action, and an inclusive curriculum—schools can create an environment where bullying is less likely to occur.

**School Leadership.** A whole-school approach to bystander intervention can create lasting cultural change by involving every member of the school community in preventing and addressing bullying (National Education Union, 2024). The focus is on those who are not directly involved in the bullying but who may witness it. The way these bystanders respond to bullying can significantly influence the school's social norms and the acceptance of harmful behaviors. School leaders need to fully support this approach, understanding its potential to shift cultural practices. They should ensure that staff and students are equipped with the tools and confidence to intervene in bullying situations effectively. This involves teaching both when and how to intervene, whether during the incident or afterward when emotions are less intense. Importantly, students must be trained to assess risks and understand that they should only intervene if they feel safe doing so. Leaders should also be aware of the benefits of this proactive approach and work to

integrate it into the school's behavior policies. These policies should make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated and outline how such behaviors will be addressed.

**Students.** Many students may not fully grasp the harm that can result from ignoring or even passively participating in bullying. They might feel pressure to conform to the behaviors of their peers, even if those behaviors make them uncomfortable. It's essential for students to understand that laughing at or ignoring bullying can contribute to the normalization of such behavior, making it seem socially acceptable and potentially leading to more severe forms of bullying (National Education Union, 2023). To counteract this, students should be educated about the different forms of bullying, why they are harmful, and the importance of challenging these behaviors. This education can start at a young age, with primary school students learning about respect and kindness, and older students examining issues like power dynamics, online bullying, and the impact of negative social norms. To ensure that these lessons are effective, schools can use anonymous surveys or questionnaires to gauge students' experiences and perceptions. This feedback can inform curriculum planning and help schools address specific issues relevant to their student body. It's also crucial that students feel safe and supported when discussing sensitive topics like bullying, and that they know where to turn for help if needed.

**Faculty and Staff.** Teachers and school staff play a vital role in delivering bystander intervention training. For this training to be effective, staff need comprehensive, supportive training that prepares them to handle difficult discussions and facilitate student-led learning (National Education Union, 2023). Staff should be equipped with techniques to guide students in understanding how their responses to bullying can influence social norms, as well as school culture and climate. It's also important that staff approach these discussions with empathy, avoiding blame and creating an environment where all students feel comfortable participating. Boys,

for instance, may feel unfairly targeted during discussions about bullying, so it's crucial to support them in understanding their role in fostering positive change without making them feel defensive or disengaged (National Education Union). Additionally, staff need to be trained to recognize and respond to different forms of bullying, including those that target specific groups, such as LGBT+ students. By understanding the broader context of bullying, staff can help students see how their actions contribute to either perpetuating or challenging harmful behaviors.

**Curriculum.** Transforming school culture cannot be achieved through a few isolated lessons. Instead, schools need to dedicate sufficient time to exploring the issues of bullying, respect, and positive relationships. For example, a series of lessons in middle school might focus on distinguishing healthy from unhealthy behaviors, while older students might spend a term examining social norms, power dynamics, and the impact of bullying (National Education Union, 2023). Incorporating discussions about bullying into various subjects can also help reinforce these lessons. For instance, teachers might highlight underrepresented groups in history or science to challenge stereotypes, or use sports figures in physical education to discuss teamwork and respect. Engaging older students in teaching younger ones about these issues can also help reinforce the message and build a sense of community responsibility.

**Community.** Parents and caregivers are an essential part of the school community and should be involved in efforts to address bullying. Schools should create open channels for parents to discuss any concerns they have and to ensure they understand the protective nature of bystander intervention programs. Engaging parents through surveys or questionnaires can help schools understand their priorities and address any concerns about the curriculum. It's important to communicate that bystander intervention programs are designed to protect students by reducing harmful behaviors and teaching them how to speak up against bullying. Schools should also seek support from local authorities to

strengthen their approach and ensure that their efforts are aligned with broader community values (National Education Union, 2023). By involving the entire community, schools can create a more supportive environment that promotes respect and discourages bullying.

### **Case Example: STAC, Bystander Intervention Training in Action**

The STAC program is a brief yet impactful bullying intervention initiative designed to empower students to act as “defenders” on behalf of their peers who are targets of bullying (Boise State University, 2024). STAC is an acronym for the four core strategies it teaches:

- **Stealing the Show:** Students use humor or distraction to interrupt a bullying situation, diverting attention away from the victim and diffusing tension.
- **Turning it Over:** Students identify safe adults at school and report the bullying, ensuring that those in authority are aware of the situation and can take appropriate action.
- **Accompanying Others:** Students offer support to the target of bullying, providing companionship and reassurance to reduce the victim's sense of isolation.
- **Coaching Compassion:** Students learn to confront perpetrators safely and effectively, encouraging them to show empathy and reconsider their actions.

The program begins with a 90-minute training session that incorporates both didactic instruction and experiential learning. This session introduces students to the concept of bullying and provides age-appropriate methods for employing the STAC strategies. After the presentation, students break into small groups to practice these techniques, ensuring they feel confident and prepared to intervene in real-world scenarios (Boise State University). Following the initial training, STAC



includes two bi-weekly, 15-minute booster sessions led by the school counselor. These sessions offer students the opportunity to discuss their experiences, receive feedback, and refine their use of the STAC strategies. By structuring the program in this way, STAC ensures that students not only learn how to effectively intervene in bullying situations but also receive ongoing support and reinforcement as they begin to apply these skills in their daily lives. Likewise, it is designed to be seamlessly integrated into a K-12 Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) or counseling program, offering a practical and manageable solution for schools committed to reducing bullying behavior.

**Effectiveness of STAC.** The STAC program, as reported by Boise State University (2024), has demonstrated significant effectiveness in addressing bullying within schools. Research has consistently shown that STAC leads to various positive outcomes for students. Students who participate in the STAC program experience notable gains in several areas, positively affecting their knowledge and self esteem:

- **Knowledge of Bullying:** Enhanced understanding of bullying dynamics and its impact.
- **Knowledge of STAC Strategies:** Improved familiarity with and application of the STAC intervention techniques.
- **Confidence to Intervene:** Greater self-assurance in acting as “defenders” in bullying situations.
- **Sense of School Belonging:** A stronger connection and sense of belonging within the school environment.
- **Self-Esteem:** Boosted self-esteem resulting from their increased role in combating bullying.

Additionally, the program has been linked to reductions in the following:

- **Bullying Perpetration and Victimization:** Lower rates of both committing and experiencing bullying at school.
- **Depression Symptoms:** Decreased levels of depression among students who are trained in the program.
- **Anxiety Symptoms:** Reduced anxiety symptoms among trained students.

These findings underscore the STAC program's effectiveness in not only addressing bullying but also enhancing overall student well-being.

## Preparing an Action Plan

To effectively combat bullying, educators and educational leaders should develop a comprehensive action plan that encompasses both school and community efforts. Drawing on successful models such as the Sun Prairie Anti-Bullying Collaborative created by the Sun Prairie Youth and Families Commission (2019), the following steps outline how to create a robust anti-bullying action plan:

**1. Establish a Collaborative Framework.** Begin by forming a diverse group of stakeholders within the school community. This group should include educators, parents, school staff, and local partners to ensure a comprehensive understanding of bullying and foster a unified approach to addressing it. The framework should include:

- **Vision Statement:** Develop a clear vision for what the school aims to achieve regarding bullying prevention, such as creating a safe and inclusive environment for all students. This vision should be ambitious yet tailored to the school's specific needs and values, guiding all subsequent efforts.
- **Shared Understanding:** Align on the nature and scope of bullying, including its various forms (physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying) and its

impact on different groups within the school community. Engage in discussions that reveal diverse experiences and perceptions, ensuring the action plan addresses bullying from multiple perspectives.

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder involved in the initiative. This clarity ensures accountability and promotes active participation from everyone involved in the collaborative framework.

**2. Organize and Structure the Initiative.** Set up an effective organizational structure to manage the anti-bullying efforts:

- **Form a Steering Committee:** Create a steering committee composed of a diverse group of school and community stakeholders, including teachers, school counselors, administrators, parents, and local mental health professionals. This diverse composition provides a well-rounded perspective on bullying prevention and encourages collaboration across various areas of expertise.
- **Develop a Budget:** Outline an initial budget that specifies the financial resources needed for the program, including funding for awareness campaigns, training sessions, and evaluation tools. Set up committees for fund development and communication to secure necessary resources and effectively communicate the program's goals.
- **Create an Implementation Timeline:** Develop a detailed timeline that includes key milestones and deadlines for the action plan. This timeline helps keep the initiative on track and ensures that all stakeholders understand their responsibilities and the overall progress of the effort.

**3. Raise Awareness.** Building community awareness about bullying and the available resources is a critical component of the action plan:

- **Launch Awareness Campaigns:** Develop and implement messaging that underscores the importance of addressing bullying within the school. Use various channels, including school announcements, newsletters, social media, and parent-teacher meetings, to reach different segments of the school community. Tailor messages to engage students, parents, and school staff effectively.
- **Engage Funders:** Seek funding for awareness campaigns and other anti-bullying initiatives by approaching local businesses, school foundations, and government grants. Highlight the impact of bullying on students and the benefits of the anti-bullying program to secure support.
- **Community-wide Engagement:** Involve individuals who have been directly affected by bullying to share their experiences and perspectives. Organize school assemblies, classroom discussions, and panel events where these individuals can speak, helping to foster empathy and a collective commitment to creating a supportive school environment..
- **Educational Workshops:** Arrange workshops for students, parents, and school staff that focus on recognizing, preventing, and addressing bullying. Ensure these workshops are interactive and provide practical strategies that participants can use in their daily interactions within the school.

**4. Implement Prevention Strategies.** Coordinate efforts to prevent bullying through targeted programs and policies:

- **Adopt a Proven Program:** Evaluate and choose a research-based anti-bullying program that fits the needs and goals of your school. Consider programs with a successful track record and strong evidence of effectiveness. Ensure that the selected program can be adapted to your school's context and integrates smoothly with current efforts.

- **Develop Policies:** Advocate for and implement school policies that strengthen bullying prevention and address any gaps. This may include updating the school's code of conduct, establishing clear procedures for reporting and responding to bullying incidents, and creating policies that promote diversity and inclusivity.
- **Training for Educators and Staff:** Provide ongoing training for educators, school staff, and administrators on recognizing and addressing bullying. This training should include information on legal requirements, intervention strategies, and ways to support students who are victims or perpetrators of bullying.
- **Peer Support Programs:** Implement peer support programs that empower students to take an active role in preventing bullying. These programs can include peer mediation, student-led anti-bullying clubs, and mentorship opportunities that promote positive peer relationships.

**5. Support Intervention Efforts.** Ensure there are effective interventions in place for addressing bullying incidents:

- **Partner with Intervention Programs:** Collaborate with organizations specializing in bullying intervention to leverage their expertise. This partnership can provide access to resources such as counseling services, conflict resolution programs, and support groups for students affected by bullying.
- **Gather and Share Data:** Collect and share data on intervention outcomes to guide and refine strategies. Regularly review incident reports, student surveys, and feedback from stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of interventions and identify areas for improvement.

- **Provide Support for Victims and Perpetrators:** Ensure that both victims and perpetrators of bullying receive the support they need. This may include counseling, social skills training, and other interventions that address the root causes of bullying behavior and promote healing.

**6. Monitor and Evaluate the Program.** Establish a streamlined system for monitoring and evaluating the anti-bullying program to track progress and make data-driven improvements:

- **Define Key Metrics and Indicators:** Establish clear, measurable outcomes related to bullying reduction, such as decreased bullying incidents, improved student well-being, and increased reporting rates. These metrics should be specific, actionable, and aligned with the overall goals of the anti-bullying initiative.
- **Set Baseline Data:** Collect initial data on bullying prevalence and related issues to serve as a benchmark for measuring progress over time. This data should include quantitative measures, such as the number of reported incidents, as well as qualitative insights from surveys and focus groups.
- **Develop Indicators:** Create specific indicators that will be used to monitor progress, such as the frequency of bullying incidents, student and staff perceptions of school climate, and the effectiveness of intervention strategies. These indicators should be regularly reviewed and adjusted as needed to reflect changing conditions or new priorities.
- **Implement Regular Monitoring:** Collect ongoing data through surveys, incident reports, and focus groups. Use this data to continuously monitor the program's effectiveness and identify areas that require additional attention or resources.

- **Engage Stakeholders:** Involve teachers, students, parents, and community members in the monitoring process to gather diverse perspectives and ensure transparency. Regularly update stakeholders on the program's progress and involve them in discussions about potential adjustments.
- **Conduct Periodic Evaluations:** Perform formative evaluations throughout the program's implementation to assess its impact and identify areas for improvement. These evaluations should focus on understanding what is working well, what challenges have arisen, and how the program can be refined to achieve better results.
- **Share Findings:** Regularly share evaluation results with all stakeholders. This transparency fosters accountability and encourages ongoing support for the program.
  - **Adjust Strategies:** Use evaluation findings to make data-driven adjustments to the program. This might include refining prevention strategies, enhancing intervention efforts, or revising policies to better address emerging challenges.
  - **Celebrate Successes:** Recognize and celebrate the program's successes, no matter how small. This helps to maintain momentum and reinforces the importance of the anti-bullying efforts.
- **Establish a Continuous Improvement Cycle:** Implement a continuous improvement cycle using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) framework. This approach involves planning changes based on evaluation data, implementing those changes, studying the results, and acting on what is learned to further improve the program.
- **Long-Term Monitoring:** Develop a plan for long-term monitoring and evaluation beyond the initial implementation phase. This ensures that the

program remains effective and responsive to the evolving needs of the school and community.

By following these steps, educators and educational leaders can create a well-rounded action plan that not only addresses bullying within schools but also extends to the broader community, fostering a safer and more inclusive environment for all students.

## **Section 2 Conclusion**

In this section, we've explored a variety of strategies designed to reduce bullying in schools, and the current research on school-based bullying prevention programs. By understanding the legal obligations and ethical responsibilities educators have, schools can establish a robust framework for preventing and addressing bullying incidents. Key strategies include fostering a positive school climate, implementing comprehensive anti-bullying policies, incorporating Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and utilizing frameworks like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Additionally, restorative justice practices and bystander intervention training play vital roles in repairing harm and encouraging a supportive school community. This section concludes with a discussion on creating an action plan, which is essential for translating these strategies into practical, actionable steps. By developing a clear and comprehensive action plan, schools can ensure that these strategies are not only understood but also effectively put into practice, leading to a safer and more inclusive environment for all students.



## Section 2 Key Terms

Anti-Bullying Policies - Strict guidelines and procedures established by schools to define unacceptable behaviors, set consistent consequences, and address bullying incidents promptly and fairly.

Bystander Effect - A social phenomenon where individuals are less likely to intervene in an emergency when others are present, assuming someone else will take responsibility.

Bystander Intervention Training - Training programs that equip students and staff with skills to recognize, intervene, and prevent bullying, emphasizing safe and effective intervention strategies.

Criminal Codes - State laws that may address bullying behavior, particularly in severe cases or when behaviors cross into criminal conduct, such as cyberbullying.

Duty of Care - The legal and moral obligation of educators to ensure a safe environment for students, including taking action to prevent and address bullying.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) - MTSS is a framework used in education to provide varying levels of support based on student needs, integrating academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions.

PBIS Framework - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports framework that uses tiered levels of support to prevent and address bullying behavior in schools.

Restorative Practices - Approaches to conflict resolution that focus on repairing harm and restoring relationships within the school community rather than traditional punitive measures.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) - Educational programs that help students manage their emotions, build resilience, and develop strong interpersonal skills, contributing to a positive school climate.

Targeted Characteristics - Specific traits or identities, such as race or disability, that are often targeted by bullying and are addressed in anti-bullying laws and policies.

Tiered Framework - A multi-level approach in PBIS and other programs that provides varying levels of support based on the needs of students, from universal prevention to intensive interventions.

Universal Prevention Efforts - Strategies implemented at the Tier 1 level in PBIS designed to benefit all students by promoting a positive school environment and preventing bullying.

## **Section 2 Reflection Questions**

1. How does your school's current policy on reporting bullying incidents align with the ethical considerations of confidentiality and transparency? What improvements could be made?
2. How does your school support students who have been identified as perpetrators of bullying? Reflect on whether this support is balanced and fair, and suggest any potential improvements.
3. Reflect on the strategies for creating a supportive culture mentioned in the section. Which of these strategies are currently implemented in your school, and how effective have they been?
4. Consider the role of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in your school's curriculum. How does SEL contribute to building resilience in students, and how can it be further integrated?
5. Review your school's mental health support resources. How do they align with the recommendations for a tiered approach to mental health services? What gaps exist, and how might they be addressed?

6. Reflect on a situation where bystander intervention could have made a difference. How would training in bystander intervention have changed the outcome?
7. Reflect on the effectiveness of your school's current action plans in addressing bullying. What improvements or additions could enhance these plans?
8. Consider the impact of cultural and societal changes on bullying. How do these changes influence your approach to bullying prevention and intervention?
9. What are the benefits and challenges of implementing restorative justice practices in schools, and how can these practices be effectively integrated into existing anti-bullying efforts?
10. How can bystander intervention training be adapted for different age groups and educational settings to maximize its impact on bullying prevention? Give specific examples.

## Section 2 Activities

1. **Review State Anti-Bullying Laws:** Research and summarize the specific anti-bullying laws and policies in your state to understand local legal requirements and regulations.
2. **Audit School Policies:** Conduct an audit of your school's existing anti-bullying policies to identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement.
3. **Analyze Incident Reports:** Review past bullying incident reports to identify trends, common issues, and areas needing attention in your school.

4. **Organize a School Climate Survey:** Develop and administer a survey to students, staff, and parents to assess the current climate and attitudes toward bullying at your school.
5. **Curate Online Resources:** Compile a list of online resources and tools related to bullying prevention and SEL that can be shared with students, parents, and colleagues.
6. **Observe Classroom Interactions:** Conduct observations of classroom interactions to assess how well the anti-bullying strategies and SEL practices are being implemented.
7. **Review SEL Programs:** Evaluate existing Social Emotional Learning programs and identify opportunities for integration into your curriculum.
8. **Develop a Resource List for Parents:** Create a resource list for parents that includes tips on recognizing and addressing bullying, as well as resources for further support.
9. **Develop Bystander Intervention Materials:** Create educational materials or presentations on bystander intervention techniques for students and staff.
10. **Collaborate on a School-Wide Anti-Bullying Initiative:** Work with other teachers and school staff to plan and implement a school-wide initiative focused on reducing bullying and fostering a positive school culture.

## Course Conclusion

As we conclude the course *Reducing Bullying Behaviors in the School Environment*, it's clear that addressing bullying requires a multifaceted approach. Throughout this course, you've gained a comprehensive understanding of bullying behaviors, explored various strategies to reduce bullying in schools, and learned how to

develop actionable plans to foster a safer educational environment. The journey began with an in-depth exploration of bullying, highlighting its various forms and the underlying dynamics that make it a pervasive issue in schools. Understanding the characteristics and impacts of bullying has provided you with the foundation needed to recognize and address these behaviors effectively. In the second section, we explored the research behind school-based bullying prevention programs, emphasizing the importance of creating a positive school climate, implementing comprehensive anti-bullying policies, and incorporating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). We also explored restorative practices and the significance of bystander intervention in creating a supportive school community. Finally, we concluded section 2 with discussion about forming an actionable plan for bullying prevention.

As you move forward, the tools and strategies you've acquired will empower you to create a safer, more inclusive environment for your students. By integrating these approaches into your daily practice and engaging your school community in anti-bullying efforts, you can make a lasting impact. The final step in this course is to apply what you've learned by developing a detailed action plan, tailored to the unique needs of your school, ensuring that the strategies discussed become a reality in your efforts to reduce bullying behaviors.

## Classroom Example

Ms. Hazel, an experienced middle school teacher in an urban district, has been facing significant challenges related to bullying in her classroom. The school serves a diverse student body with varying socioeconomic backgrounds, and while Ms. Hazel is dedicated to creating an inclusive and supportive environment, she has

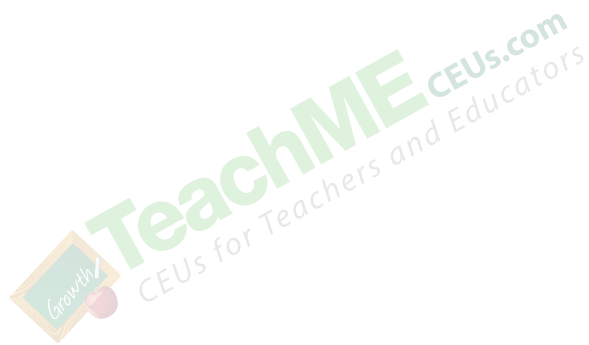
noticed increasing incidents of relational aggression and cyberbullying among her students.

## Challenges

1. **Relational Aggression:** In Ms. Hazel's classroom, several students have been engaging in relational aggression—spreading rumors, excluding peers from group activities, and manipulating friendships to assert power. This behavior has created a toxic environment, where some students feel isolated and anxious, affecting their academic performance and overall well-being.
2. **Cyberbullying:** The rise of social media use among Ms. Hazel's students has led to instances of cyberbullying, where students are harassed or demeaned online, often outside of school hours. This has made it difficult for Ms. Hazel to intervene effectively, as the bullying behavior extends beyond the school's immediate reach.
3. **Lack of Reporting:** Despite efforts to encourage students to speak up, many incidents go unreported. Ms. Hazel suspects this is due to fear of retaliation or a belief that reporting will not lead to meaningful consequences. This has left some students feeling unsupported and vulnerable.
4. **Parental Involvement:** Ms. Hazel has found it challenging to engage parents in addressing these issues. Some parents are unaware of their children's online behavior, while others are hesitant to get involved, believing that the school should handle the situation independently.

Despite her dedication to fostering a positive and safe learning environment, Ms. Hazel feels overwhelmed by the complexity of these issues. The relational aggression, coupled with the pervasive nature of cyberbullying, has made it difficult for her to ensure all students feel safe and included in her classroom. She

recognizes the need for a comprehensive approach that involves not just the school, but also parents and the broader community, to effectively address and prevent bullying.



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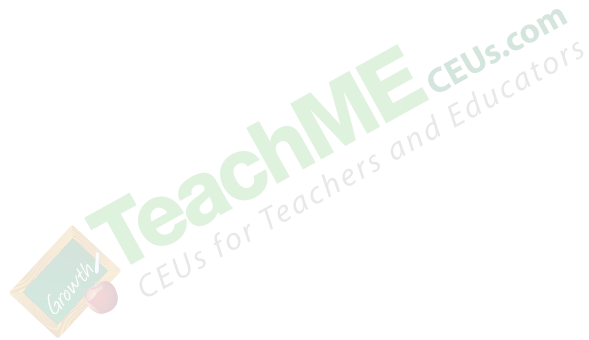
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